

Section I: Accomplishments

Judges

Judicial Committees

The judicial committees address Court-related issues and consist of bankruptcy judges and management staff from the Clerk's Office. These committees are responsible for providing feedback regarding Court operations and administrative issues. During 2001, the standing judicial committees were:

- Executive Committee
- Case Management Committee
- Chapter 13 Committee
- Education and Training Committee
- *Pro Se* Committee
- Rules Committee
- Space and Security Committee
- United States Trustee Liaison Committee

The task force/*ad hoc* committees were:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee
- Complex Chapter 11 Case Committee
- Judicial Practices Task Force
- Judicial Variance Survey Subcommittee
- Legislation Liaison
- Strategic Planning Committee

General Order to Streamline Chapter 11 Procedures

After obtaining input from bankruptcy practitioners from throughout the district, a committee of bankruptcy judges and attorneys developed new procedures governing chapter 11 bankruptcy cases filed in the district. The procedures were designed to increase uniformity and efficiency within the district in the administration of chapter 11 cases. They provide concise parameters for motions requiring emergency or expedited relief, motions for emergency use of cash collateral financing and cash management, motions for orders establishing procedures for the sale of the estate's assets, motions to employ professionals, and address other issues of importance in chapter 11 cases.



Sheri Bluebond Appointed Bankruptcy Judge

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viewing.

On January 17, 2001, it was announced that Sheri Bluebond was selected as a bankruptcy judge for the Central District of California in the Los Angeles Division, a vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Lisa Hill Fenning. Judge Bluebond's appointment commenced on February 1, 2001. Judge Bluebond received both her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of California at Los Angeles. She has given numerous lectures on bankruptcy-related topics and is a member of several bankruptcy-related organizations including the American Bankruptcy Institute, the Bankruptcy Committee of the Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (of which she was chair at time of her appointment to the bench), and was a mediator for the Bankruptcy Mediation Program for the Central District of California. She is also the vice-president of the Jewish Big Brothers/Camp Max Strauss.

Six Judges Receive Reappointment

United States bankruptcy judges are appointed to 14-year terms by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In December 2001, six Central District of California bankruptcy judges received notification of their reappointment:

Judge Arthur M. Greenwald - Effective March 9, 2002, Judge Arthur M. Greenwald was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge. First appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988, Judge Greenwald maintains his chambers in the San Fernando Valley Division. Judge Greenwald also serves as a director of the Los Angeles Bankruptcy Forum.

Judge Robin L. Riblet - Effective March 30, 2002, Judge Robin L. Riblet was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge. Judge Riblet maintains her chambers in the Northern Division and was first appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988. Judge Riblet formerly chaired the Court's Rules Committee and is currently chair of the U. S. Trustee Liaison Committee.

Judge Kathleen T. Lax - Judge Kathleen T. Lax was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge effective April 4, 2002. Originally appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988, Judge Lax maintains her chambers in the San Fernando Valley Division. Judge Lax previously chaired the Court's Chapter 13 Committee.

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for public viewing.

(Judges from left):
**Alan M. Ahart, Mitchel R. Goldberg,
Arthur M. Greenwald, Kathleen T. Lax,
Robin L. Riblet, Vincent P. Zurzolo,
Geraldine Mund - Chief Judge**

Judge Alan M. Ahart - Judge Alan M. Ahart was reappointed to a second term as a bankruptcy judge effective April 4, 2002. Originally appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988, Judge Ahart maintains his chambers in the Los Angeles Division. Judge Ahart formerly chaired the Court's Case Management Committee and is the current chair of the Education and Training Committee.

Judge Vincent P. Zurzolo - Effective April 18, 2002, Judge Vincent P. Zurzolo was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge. Judge Zurzolo chairs both the Court's Space and Security Committee and the Case Management Committee. Judge Zurzolo was originally appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988 and maintains his chambers in the Los Angeles Division.

Judge Mitchel R. Goldberg - Judge Mitchel R. Goldberg was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge effective June 1, 2002. Judge Goldberg also chairs the Court's *Pro Se* Committee. Judge Goldberg was originally appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1988 and maintains his chambers in the Riverside Division.

Judge Ryan Selected as Presiding Judge of Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel

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available
for public
viewing.

On October 3, 2001, John E. Ryan was selected as the presiding judge of the Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel (BAP). He succeeds Judge Barry Russell, who served on the BAP from 1988 through 2001, and as presiding judge from 1999 through 2001. Judge Ryan assumed the role of presiding judge on January 1, 2002.

The BAP is composed of six judges from the Ninth Circuit. The BAP judges hear arguments from throughout the Ninth Circuit in panels of three. Judge Ryan plans to follow the strong leadership precedent established by former presiding judges. He intends to continue the practice of allowing *pro tem* judges to participate on various panels, enabling other bankruptcy judges to gain experience with the appellate process.

Court Expands *Pro Bono* Programs to All Divisions

The Court, in cooperation with local bar associations, offers *pro bono* programs to assist the high number of *pro se* debtors (debtors not represented by an attorney) throughout the district. These programs provide free legal assistance from volunteer attorneys in all divisions of the Court to *pro se* debtors meeting certain eligibility requirements. *Pro se* debtors have filed approximately 33% of all bankruptcy cases since 1994 in the Central District, one of the highest percentage of *pro se* debtors in the nation. The *pro bono* programs serve to benefit both the Court and the *pro se* debtors. The *pro bono* programs benefit the Court by helping to eliminate some of the time delays caused by *pro se* debtors unfamiliar with the bankruptcy process. Additionally, by receiving explanations of their rights, *pro se* debtors are able to make informed decisions that protect their rights.

During the year 2001, these *pro bono* programs provided hundreds of qualified low income debtors with assistance in preparing voluntary chapter 7 petitions and free legal representation in non-dischargeability adversary proceedings. Project attorneys assisted 801 debtors in understanding their rights prior to reaffirmation agreement hearings. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Central District of California Bankruptcy Court *Pro Bono* Programs: 2001

Division	Date Program Introduced	Debtors Offered Discharge-ability Assistance	Debtors Provided with Discharge-ability Assistance	Debtors Offered Reaffirmation Agreement Assistance	Debtors Provided Reaffirmation Agreement Assistance
Los Angeles	10/97	1,200	144	329	600
San Fernando Valley	10/97	510		378	
Santa Ana	11/99	N/A	N/A	126	114
Northern	9/00	N/A	N/A	87	87
Riverside	4/01	425	9	N/A	N/A
Total		2,135	153	920	801

Riverside Division

In April 2001, the Riverside Division initiated a *pro bono* program coordinated by the Public Service Law Corporation to assist *pro se* debtors in § 523 and § 727 adversary proceedings. Four hundred twenty-five debtors were offered, and nine accepted, dischargeability assistance by volunteer local attorneys during the nine months the program operated during 2001.

Los Angeles/San Fernando Valley Divisions

In the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions, a *pro bono* program known as the Debtor Assistance Project (DAP) was established in 1997 by the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section and Public Counsel, a not-for-profit legal organization, with the assistance and cooperation of the judges. For debtors meeting certain eligibility requirements, this program provides free legal assistance in the preparation of a chapter 7 bankruptcy petition and also representation in § 523 dischargeability adversary proceedings. Additionally, volunteer attorneys also provide free legal assistance to *pro se* debtors to ensure that they fully understand the legal impact of the Court approving their requests for reaffirmation agreements.

Information about the DAP is prominently featured on the Court's web site, including program-related public notices, educational materials on reaffirmation agreements in both English and Spanish, and training and sign-up materials for attorneys interested in volunteering for the program. The training materials include a brief overview of bankruptcy law and procedure, and also of the issues that might arise when representing low income chapter 7 debtors. Since its inception, over 200 attorneys have volunteered their services under the program.



Santa Ana Division

Through the joint efforts of the Orange County Bar Association, the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum, the Orange County Public Law Center, and the division's judges and clerks, a *pro bono* program was established in the Santa Ana Division in 1999. The program, which was modeled after a similar program established in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions, was designed to help *pro se* debtors better understand their rights prior to reaffirmation agreement hearings. Each month, judges in the Santa Ana Division consolidate their reaffirmation agreement hearings into one calendar to afford volunteer attorneys an opportunity to provide these debtors counseling one hour before the hearings. The judges in the division hear these matters on a rotating basis from month to month.

Northern Division

The Northern Division's *pro bono* program is handled by two local attorneys who alternate counseling debtors. The two attorneys attend Judge Riblet's monthly reaffirmation agreement calendar. Before the hearings begin, the volunteer attorney makes an announcement in the courtroom that he is available to consult with any *pro se* debtors who want assistance. Debtors interested in the service then meet with the attorney for consultation in a conference room prior to their hearings.

Bankruptcy Mediation Program Assists the Court and Litigants

Recognizing that formal litigation of disputes in bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings frequently imposes significant economic burdens on parties and often delays resolution of those disputes, the Court established an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program in 1995 that is believed to be the largest of its type in the nation. The Mediation Program for Bankruptcy Cases and Adversary Proceedings, commonly known as the "Mediation Program," enables parties to resolve their disputes more quickly, at less cost, and without the stress and pressure associated with litigation. Currently, over 200 mediators participate in this program. Mediators are required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of mediation training and agree to provide one day of mediation at no charge each quarter.

As of December 31, 2001, 2,355 matters have been assigned to the Mediation Program since its introduction. Of the matters assigned, 2,245 matters have been concluded while 110 remain pending. Of the 2,245 completed matters, 1,420 (63%) were settled and 825 (37%) were not settled. Matters not settled resume litigation and are decided by a bankruptcy judge. Below are some key statistics regarding the Mediation Program since its inception:

Table 2
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
Mediation Program Statistics through December 31, 2001

Total number of matters assigned to ADR since July 1995	2,355
Total number of matters concluded 1,420 matters settled (63%) 825 matters not settled (37%)	2,245
Current number of pending matters	110
Number of mediators	205
Number of employees needed to administer the project	3



A computer program developed in-house tracks all matters assigned to the Mediation Program, monitors the mediators' assignments and availability, and generates numerous types of statistical reports almost instantly by such categories as individual judge, division, chapter, matter description, and status of matter.

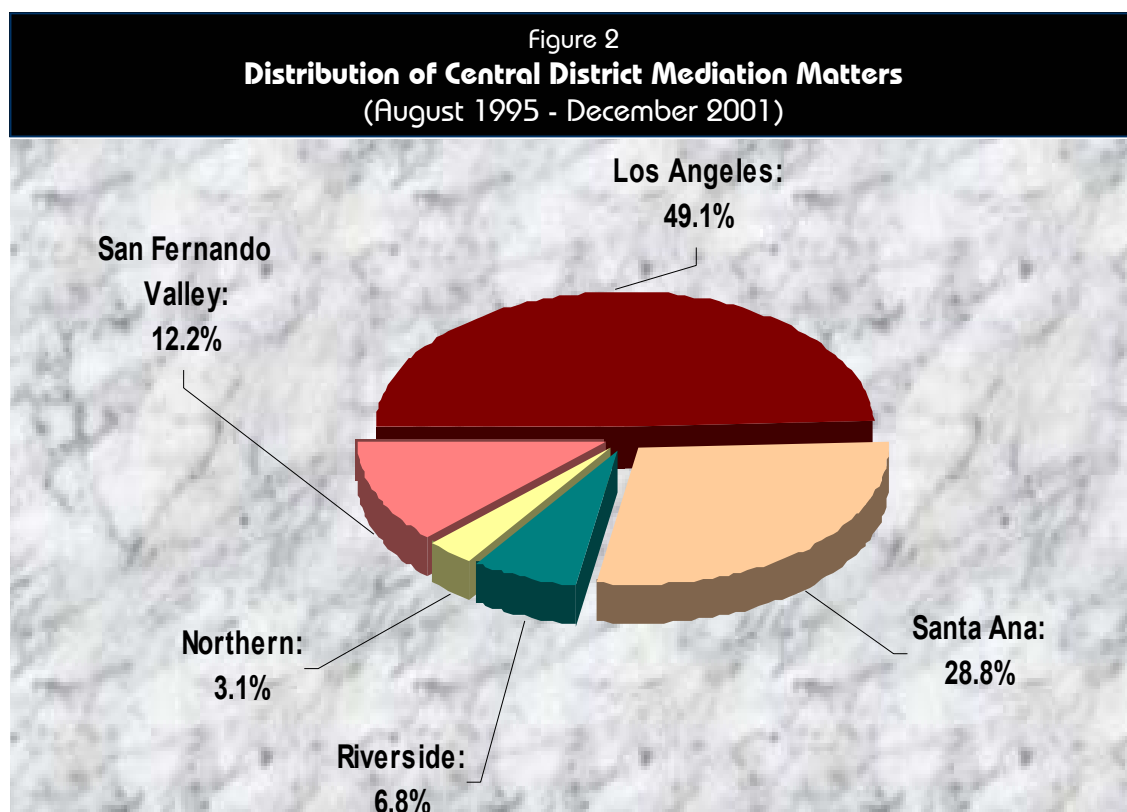
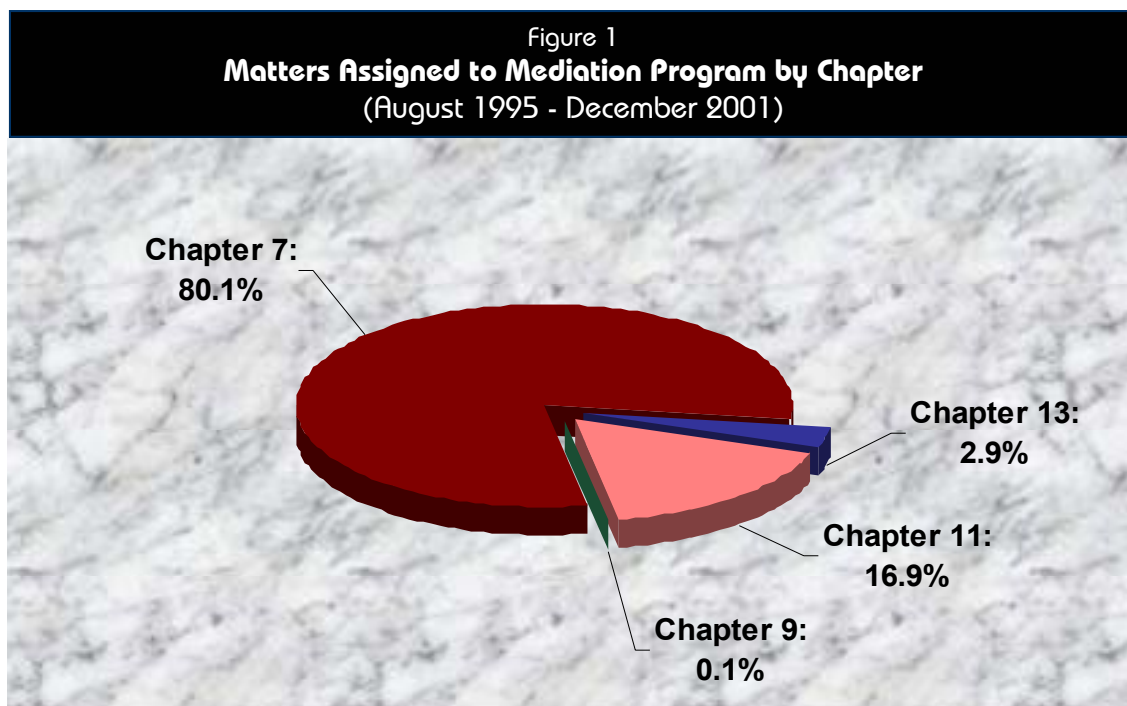
A comprehensive questionnaire enables the Court to determine the participants' perception of the Mediation Program. Data from these questionnaires are analyzed using a statistics software program. Of the questionnaires mailed to parties and attorneys who have attended mediation conferences, 2,133 completed questionnaires have been returned to the Court (representing a return rate of approximately 36%, which is considered excellent in view of the fact that questionnaires are anonymous and voluntarily submitted). Data from the completed questionnaires are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Participant Satisfaction with Mediation Program as of December 31, 2001

Respondents satisfied with the mediation process.	83%
Respondents who would use the Mediation Program again.	93%
Respondents who considered their settlement fair.	81%
Respondents who believed parties will comply with settlement.	87%
Respondents who believed mediator was effective in encouraging clients to engage in meaningful negotiations.	84%
Respondents who believed mediator was effective in getting the attorneys to engage in meaningful negotiations.	85%

The Central District continues to benefit from the Mediation Program, enabling judges to focus on matters truly requiring judicial intervention. The Mediation Program also provides the judiciary with much-needed data demonstrating that mediation can resolve cases more quickly and at less cost, while reducing the stress and pressure of litigation. The program also provides a model for implementing other successful programs throughout the United States.

The following figures display the matters assigned to the Mediation Program by chapter, as well as the distribution of mediation matters within the various divisions of the Court. (See Figures 1 and 2, below.)





Visiting Bankruptcy Judge Provides Support to the Northern Division

Judge Richard T. Ford, bankruptcy judge from the Eastern District of California, returned to the Northern Division as a visiting judge several times in 2001. During his visits, Judge Ford heard matters related to adversary proceedings from Judge Robin L. Riblet's caseload. Judge Ford held 36 trials and evidentiary hearings during 2001.

Judges Display Commitment to Community Involvement

The bankruptcy judges of the Central District of California maintained a busy schedule outside of the courtroom during 2001. Judges were frequent lecturers at law schools and legal forums. Various articles were also published by the judges during the year. Below are a few of the activities the judges were involved with in 2001:

- Teaching bankruptcy law at a law school and university.
- Judging moot court competitions for various Los Angeles area law schools.
- Co-authoring book on International Insolvency.
- Publishing various articles on bankruptcy-related issues, including a 2001 Editor's Award-winning piece on enforcing non-dischargeable money judgments.
- Serving on multiple bankruptcy committees including the Ninth Circuit's Bankruptcy Education Committee, the Executive Committee of the American Bar Association National Conference of Federal Trial Judges, and the American Inns of Court Movement.
- Serving on the ABA committee drafting guidelines for bankruptcy laws for developing countries.
- Serving as chair of the International Judicial Relations Committee of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges and the Ethics 2000 Liaison Committee of the Los Angeles County Bar Association.
- Speaking engagements in front of a variety of local and California bar groups, and numerous attorney "Brown Bag" seminars.



Customer Service

Court Received Two Public Service Image Awards

On June 26, 2001, the Court received two awards from the Federal Executive Board of Greater Los Angeles at its Annual Public Service Image Awards Ceremony. The Public Service Image Awards recognize public agencies that epitomize the highest standard of customer service. The Court received one award in recognition of the establishment of *pro bono* programs in all five divisions designed to ensure that low-income debtors are not legally disadvantaged due to an inability to afford legal representation. The second award acknowledged the Court's dramatic improvement in the nationwide *Bankruptcy Program Indicators* rankings. (See article: *Bankruptcy Court Achieves Extraordinary Improvement in Case Management*, page 34.) Between the years 1993 and 2001, the Court jumped from 87th to a second place ranking among the nation's bankruptcy courts. The Court's excellent performance in the rankings is indicative of the level of customer service provided to the public.

Public Use of Online Case Files Continued to Increase

Online case files were first introduced in the Los Angeles, Northern, and San Fernando Valley divisions in 1998 and expanded to the Riverside and Santa Ana divisions in 1999. By imaging the bankruptcy case documents most requested by the public (i.e., petitions, schedules, amended schedules, chapter 11 and chapter 13 plans, and orders) and making them available through the Court's PACER system, the Court has enabled the public to review and print online case file documents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from any computer equipped with either a modem or Internet access. In 2001, electronic images of over two million documents, equating to 4,436,698 pages, were added to the Court's online case files.

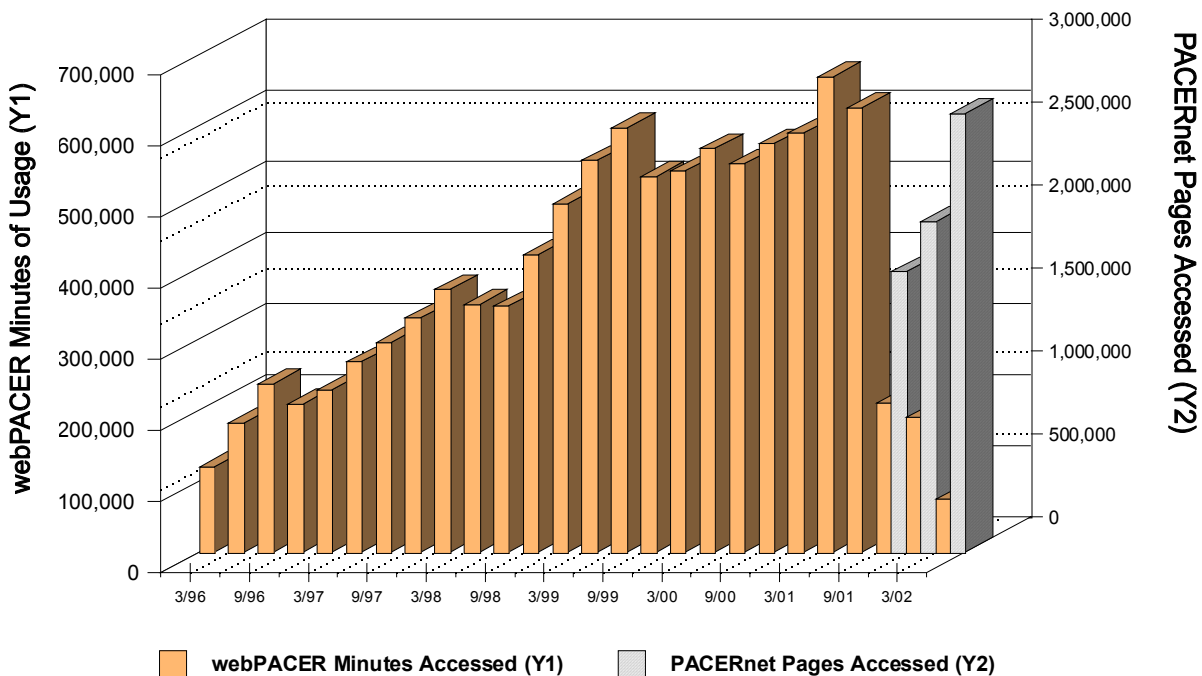
Online case file automation is integrated into the Court's existing case management system. High-speed imaging equipment is used to scan case documents, and bar-coded cover sheets assist in linking each image to the appropriate online case file. During the year, this process was streamlined by the Clerk's Office through the introduction of enhanced case management software for several document types. (See article: *Clerk's Office Continues to Add Case Management Enhancements*, page 30.) Before being made available to the public, imaged documents are quality controlled for legibility and to ensure they are linked to the appropriate case and docket entry.

Occasionally, there are "high profile" cases filed in the district that generate a high degree of public interest. In these instances, the Court images every document filed in the case and makes it available for public viewing via PACER. There were two cases during 2001 for which this service was initiated. In relation to the California energy crisis, California Power Exchange Corporation filed for bankruptcy relief under chapter 11 during 2001. Reed Slatkin, the founder of Earthlink, also filed a high profile bankruptcy during 2001, which is available for public viewing.

PACERnet Access to Online Case Files Debuts in the Central District

On July 1, 2001, the public's ability to access online case information through the PACER system expanded with the introduction of PACERnet. PACERnet provides the public with access to the Court's online case file system via the Internet and is an alternative to the older webPACER, a dial-up system. One advantage of the speedier PACERnet system is that it is less expensive to access case files, charging users \$0.07 per page while webPACER charges \$0.60 per minute. Additionally, files can be accessed more quickly since PACERnet is web-based, while webPACER utilizes a dial-up modem to view case files. During the third quarter, the quarter in which the two systems were first made simultaneously available, the two systems generated similar revenue. By the end of the first quarter of 2002, approximately 80% of the billings were from the public's use of PACERnet. It is expected that PACERnet usage will continue to increase as the public becomes more aware of and comfortable with the service.

Figure 3
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
PACERnet vs. webPACER Utilization



Voice Case Information System Continues to Provide Information to the Public

The Voice Case Information System (VCIS) is an automated telephone system providing the public with basic bankruptcy case information (i.e., case number, case filing date, chapter, status of case, and asset information) through the use of a touch-tone telephone. This free service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Due to the increasing popularity of the PACER system, which gives users online access to full case information, usage of VCIS decreased in each of the past two years. During 2001, VCIS received an estimated 438,000 calls, a 19% decrease from the 544,000 handled the previous year. (See Table 4.) However, this decrease was more than offset by the increased usage of the PACER online case information system by the public.

Table 4
Estimated Voice Case Information System (VCIS) Usage: 2000-2001

Division	Total Calls 2000	Total Calls 2001	Number Change	Percent Change
Los Angeles	285,000	195,000	(90,000)	(32%)
Riverside	91,000	90,000	(1,000)	(1%)
Santa Ana	69,000	63,000	(6,000)	(9%)
Northern	31,000	26,000	(5,000)	(16%)
San Fernando Valley	68,000	64,000	(4,000)	(6%)
District Total	544,000	438,000	(106,000)	(19%)

Public Recognizes High Customer Service Levels Provided by Clerk's Office Staff

The 2001 *Customer Service Questionnaire* gave Court staff high marks for competence, courtesy, and efficiency. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gain a user's perspective on the Court's operations. The questionnaire covers topics such as the performance of the Court employee who assisted the customer, the length of the customer's wait, and the appearance of the facility. It also provides customers the opportunity to leave comments and suggestions for the Court's consideration. The following is a breakdown of the results of the 2001 questionnaires:

- Approximately 98% of the respondents rated the "overall service" they received as excellent. "Overall service" includes the courtesy, competence, and speed of the Court employee with whom the customer dealt.
- Nearly 98% of the respondents judged the appearance and the convenience of the facility they visited as excellent.
- Over 82% of the respondents described their wait as short, and 54% indicated that they were served immediately.
- A majority of the respondents (70%) also indicated that they would take advantage of electronic access to the Court (e.g., e-filing, online case access, etc.).

The following table and figures summarize the services used by *Customer Service Questionnaire* respondents, the waiting times encountered, and the types of customers who responded:

Table 5
Customer Service Questionnaire: Services Used in 2001
 (Multiple responses possible)

Intake/Filing Counter	77%
Records	13%
Public Information Office	17%
Courtroom Services	11%
Other	2%



Figure 4
Customer Service Questionnaire: Length of Wait
 (January - December 2001)

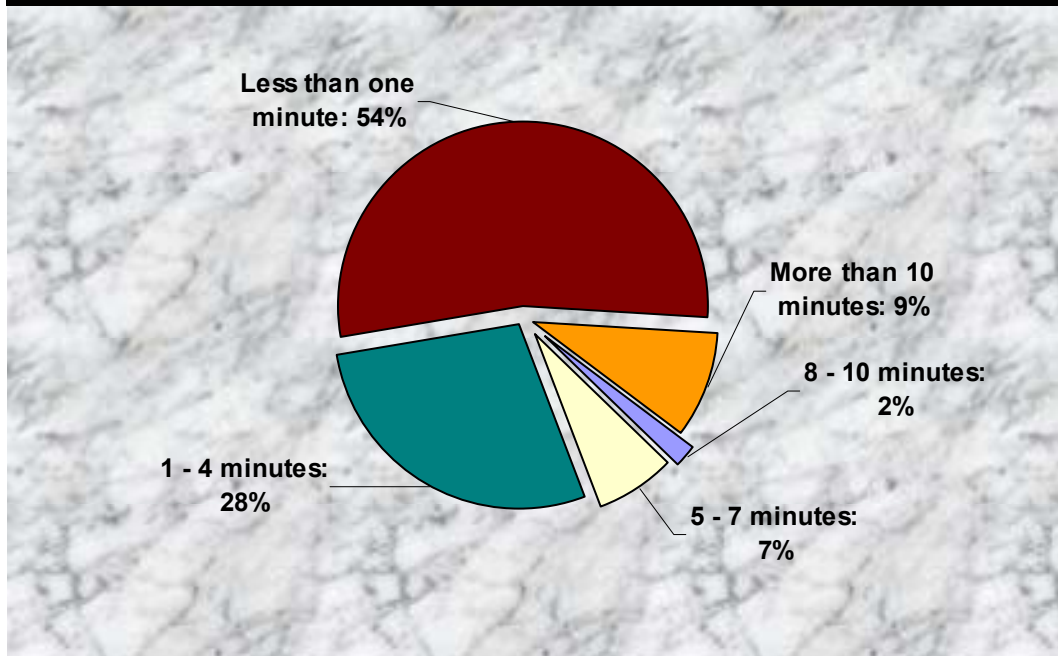
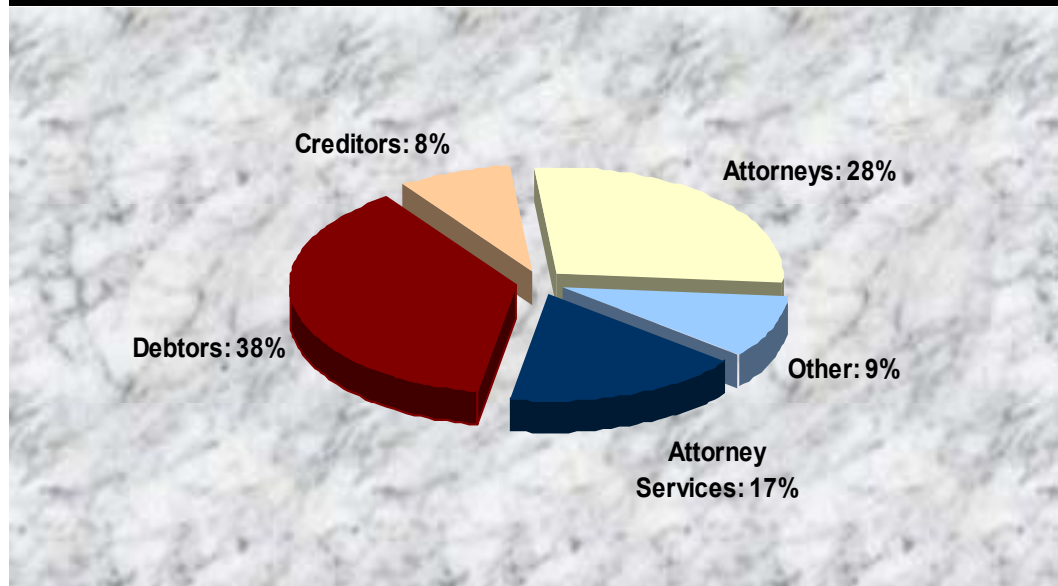


Figure 5
Customer Service Questionnaire: Who Responded
 (January - December 2001)



Security Concerns Force Change in Drop Box Policies

In light of security concerns and District Court efforts to address these concerns, the Court eliminated the drop boxes in the Riverside and Santa Ana divisions. However, drop boxes remain available for public use in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions. The drop boxes are available from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the courthouses in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. The boxes give the public an opportunity to file documents after normal court hours and can also be used during business hours to avoid waiting in line.

JNS Copy Service Awarded New Contracts

JNS Copy Service was awarded the on-site copy service contracts for all five divisions. The contracts took effect on October 1, 2001. The photocopy charges for the public decreased for all divisions as a result of the new two-year contracts. The Clerk's Office was responsible for soliciting the bids and awarding the contracts in a new decentralized procedure with guidance from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.



Facilities/Emergency Preparedness

Building Security Measures Undertaken

In response to security issues raised by the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., and the subsequent national anthrax mail threat, the Clerk's Office undertook several measures to ensure the safety of both the staff and the public. The new initiatives included increased security at all five divisions and instructions for employees on handling various emergency situations. Additional supplies (e.g., gloves, face masks, portable showers, etc.) were distributed for the safety of those individuals handling mail. Instructions on what to do in the event of possible exposure to anthrax were provided to all staff. Also, the Clerk's Office revised and updated the existing emergency manuals to ensure that the Court could act swiftly in the event of an emergency.

Court Responds to State Energy Crisis

In response to the energy crisis in the state of California, the Court implemented a district-wide disaster recovery plan in March 2001 to ensure that current data would be available for restoration in the event of a disaster or data corruption at any of the divisions. Each division also developed Power Outage Action Plans, which outline procedures for staff to follow to minimize damage in the event of a prolonged power outage and to also restore court operations as soon as possible.

Improvements Made to Court Facilities throughout the District

Numerous physical and operational improvements were made to Court facilities throughout the district in 2001. Below is a list of the major projects undertaken.

- In line with cyclical maintenance directives, a carpet replacement program was initiated in 2001 in the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building involving public corridors and judges' chambers. Carpeting was replaced in public corridors on the 9th, 10th, 12th, and 13th floors. Carpet replacement also began in the judicial areas of the building.
- Flush-mounted, in-wall monitors providing electronic hearing dates, times, and locations were installed in the main lobby and on the 5th and 6th floors of the Santa Ana Division. The Court Calendar Program, the NIBS electronic calendaring enhancement, provides the public with up-to-date calendar information via these monitors.
- The installation of Federal Judicial Television Network (FJTN) satellite dishes in the Riverside, Northern, and San Fernando Valley divisions completed this communication link to both the Administrative Office of the United States Courts and the Federal Judicial Center for the entire district. The satellite dishes enable the independent direct reception of programs and other training-related broadcasts by each division.
- A district-wide repair/maintenance program was launched. The scope of work includes repairs and refinishing of all courtrooms, touch-up of millwork in chambers, wallcovering cleaning, and general repairs in all divisions.
- A public areas artwork program was approved. Artwork committees in each division made selections.
- Construction of a secured parking structure for the judges in the Riverside Division has begun. Completion is expected in the first quarter of 2002.



Human Resources

Court Completes Staff Restructuring

In response to the decrease in the fiscal year 2001 budget, particularly the amount allocated for staff salaries, the Court was forced to reorganize and reduce its staff. Many employees were reclassified into jobs that more accurately reflected the person's skills. The Court offered assistance to displaced employees by opening a temporary Career Transition Center. The Court also promoted cross-training among employees in different departments.

In order to improve staff development procedures, the Court reorganized the Quality Assurance/Training Department into two separate entities: Staff Development and Quality Assurance. The mission of the revamped Staff Development Department is to create a broad Court training plan that provides for comprehensive training to all employees focusing on their present job function while developing staff skills to ensure that the Court's staffing needs can be met in-house. The Quality Assurance function, which handles quality control issues such as improving procedures and developing software, was transferred to the Analysis and Information Department. The reorganization was completed during the first quarter of 2001.

Tuition Reimbursement Program Assists Staff in Achieving Educational Goals

Providing financial assistance to Court employees pursuing work-related educational goals since 1997, the Court's Tuition Reimbursement Program helped 11 employees earn college credit during the year. One employee earned a master's degree during 2001 with support from the program. Overall, the employees received nearly \$4,000 in tuition reimbursement during 2001.

Superior Performance by Staff Recognized during Annual Awards Ceremonies

Once again, each divisional office held a Special Service Award ceremony to honor Court employees for their hard work during the year. Executive Officer/Clerk of Court Jon D. Ceretto joined Chief Judge Geraldine Mund in expressing appreciation for another successful year and reiterated the Court's important function during the national crisis. The ceremony also featured additional "thank you's" from Judge Russell in Los Angeles, Judge Jury in Riverside, Judge Ryan in Santa Ana, and Judge Riblet in Santa Barbara. Length of Service Awards were presented by each division's Deputy-in-Charge to employees based on the length of their tenure with the Court. Chief Deputy of Operations Michael Rotberg and former Chief Deputy of Administration David Grube presented individual service awards to employees who demonstrated an outstanding commitment to service. Each ceremony was followed by a catered buffet and the presentation of a rolling-style backpack embroidered with the Court's logo as a show of gratitude to employees. However, the festivities reflected a note of somberness, as the majority of the ceremonies were delayed due to the terrorist attacks of September 11. At the ceremonies, Judge Mund emphasized the need for greater community involvement and called on staff to create volunteer service programs at each division.

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for public viewing.

San Fernando Valley

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for public viewing.

Northern Division



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for public viewing.

Los Angeles

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for public viewing.

Northern

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for public viewing.

Santa Ana

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Los Angeles

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Riverside

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Santa Ana

Abra ESS Rolled Out for Staff Access

The Abra Employee Self-Service (ESS) program was rolled out to all Clerk's Office employees in November 2001. Abra ESS allows employees to view their personal data maintained by the Human Resources Department, such as basic employee demographic information, emergency information, salary data, performance evaluation due dates, and leave balances, from their own desktop computers. Users are also able to link to a variety of human resource-related web sites and submit requests to update personal information from within Abra ESS. The Human Resources Department prepared a user-friendly manual that was distributed to the entire Court staff. The manual provides users with step-by-step instructions on accessing and navigating through the system.

Employee of the Month Successfully Continued in 2001

Each month, the Court bestows an "Employee of the Month" award upon a staff member in the Clerk's Office who has gone above and beyond the scope of his or her responsibilities to either assist the public, help fellow employees, or improve the work environment. At a special monthly ceremony, each winner received a moderate cash award, an "Employee of the Month" certificate, a leather portfolio, a special award to display in his or her workstation and a photograph of the presentation. Additionally, an article spotlighting the employee appeared in the Court's monthly newsletter, the *Full Court Press*.

2001 Employees of the Month

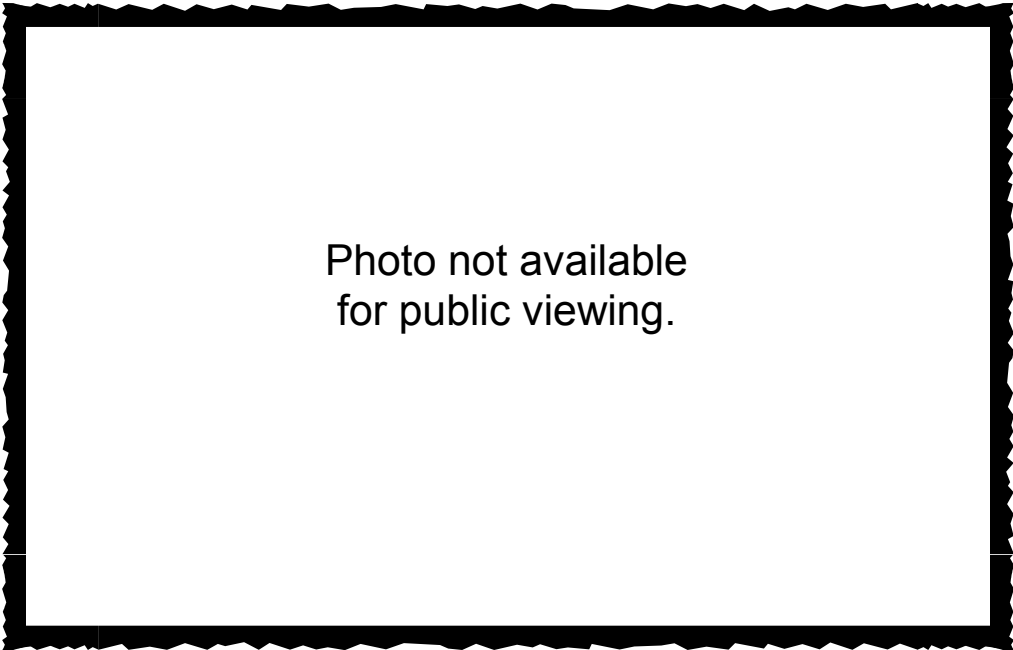


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for public viewing.

TOP ROW (FROM LEFT):

JON D. CERETTO, EXECUTIVE OFFICER/CLERK, DANIELLE CHACKEL - NORTHERN (OCTOBER),
LITAUN LEWIS - LOS ANGELES (JULY), ANGEL PAVIA - LOS ANGELES (SEPTEMBER),
NANCY VANDENSTEEN - LOS ANGELES (MARCH), JAMES SANDINO - LOS ANGELES (AUGUST)

BOTTOM ROW (FROM LEFT):

ED PABROS - RIVERSIDE (APRIL), JESSIE TENG - LOS ANGELES (MAY),
JANE FOMOCOD - LOS ANGELES (JANUARY), THANHVI NGUYEN - SANTA ANA (JUNE),
LATISHA McDONALD - RIVERSIDE (DECEMBER), VERONICA MAGNO - SAN FERNANDO VALLEY (FEBRUARY)

NOT PICTURED:

FERN CAMPBELL - SAN FERNANDO VALLEY (NOVEMBER)



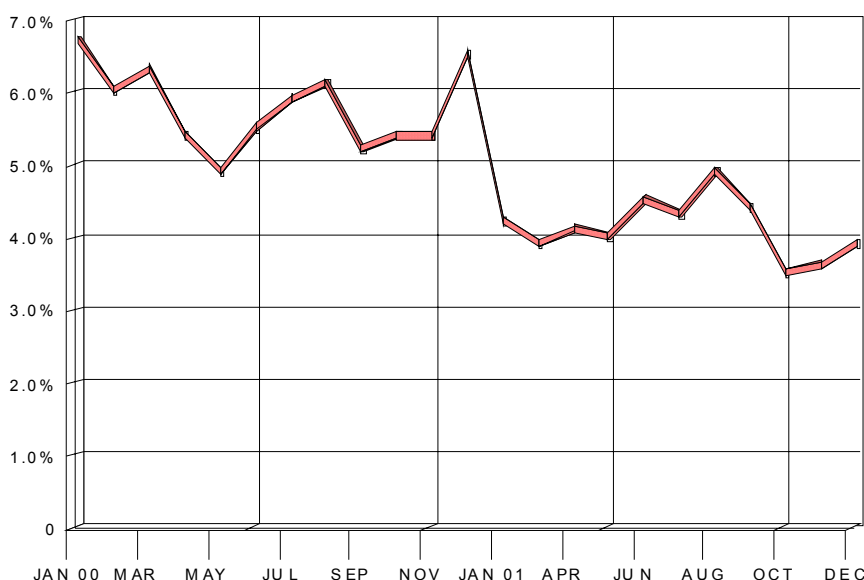
Quality Assurance/Training

Quality Control Efforts Result in Improved Data Entry of New Petitions

The Clerk's Office achieved a 29% reduction in the number of petitions containing a data entry error in 2001, compared to its performance in 2000. This was an impressive achievement given that each petition contains hundreds of characters that must be entered into the Intake Cashiering System (ICS). During 2001, nearly 96% of all petitions were entered into ICS completely error free. The improvement resulted from better data entry procedures implemented during 2001, along with an increased emphasis on quality.

A new version of the automated program used for the quality control of new petition data entry (QC/ICS) was implemented throughout the district in March 2001. The new version of the program is more user-friendly and accurate than the original version. The system has increased reporting capabilities for all new petitions throughout the district, which provides management with information on common input errors. It allows each division to detect and correct any errors prior to entering petition data into NIBS, the case management system, and PACER. It also decreases the amount of time taken to correct errors before information is entered in the case management system. The new automated program resulted in multiple benefits such as saving approximately 40 hours of staff time per month in the review of new petitions, and enhancing customer service by improving the accuracy of petitions. Additionally, the error data collected by QC/ICS enabled management in each division to identify specific areas of weakness and tailor corrective action to address those areas.

Figure 6
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
Percent of New Bankruptcy Petitions with Data Entry Errors



Court Continues to Develop Staff Skills

As in years past, the Court continued to emphasize the development of skills in the areas of automation, bankruptcy operations, team building, leadership, and general office skills. During 2001, a total of 10,425 hours of training was provided to staff through 1,579 training sessions and courses. (See Table 6.)



Table 6
District-Wide Training: 2001

Classes		Staff Participant Hours					
Name	Quantity	Total	LA	AS	SA	ND	SFV
SOFTWARE/COMPUTER TRAINING							
Judges/Judicial Assistants Automation (various)	25	150	78	6	54	-	12
Abra ESS	9	45	25	7	6	2	5
QC/ICS	7	130	56	18	20	12	24
Intellitrack	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Citrix	2	3	-	-	3	-	-
CISCO	2	11	-	-	7	4	-
Lotus Notes	28	200	21	176	3	-	-
Windows XP	1	105	105	-	-	-	-
Java Script	3	42	42	-	-	-	-
Netware	4	8	-	-	8	-	-
Visual Basics	5	360	360	-	-	-	-
PowerPoint	3	136	94	-	42	-	-
SOFTWARE/COMPUTER TRAINING TOTAL	90	1,191	781	207	143	18	42
FJC/RO-SPONSORED PROGRAMS & FJTN PRESENTATIONS							
Leadership for Results	16	150	78	38	24	2	8
Human Resources Benefits and Information (various)	25	263	95	53	42	7	66
How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci	1	13	13	-	-	-	-
Information Technology Talk	2	10	7	-	3	-	-
Lotus Notes Migration	2	6	4	-	2	-	-
Manager as Writing Coach II	2	12	6	-	-	-	6
Making Your Mark By Proofreading	2	73	60	-	-	-	13
Court Forum: Managing Performance Problems	4	67	26	26	10	5	-
Workshop for the 9th Circuit Judicial Sec's and JA's	4	28	14	14	-	-	-
How Cases Move Through The Bankruptcy Court I-IV	4	69	69	-	-	-	-
Adobe Acrobat Forms, Security and Web Capture	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
FJTN Lotus Notes/ECF	1	2	-	-	2	-	-
FJC/RO-SPONSORED PROGRAMS & FJTN PRESENTATIONS	64	694	372	131	83	15	93
OTHER TRAINING							
On the Job Training/Lunch and Learn	1,334	6,508	271	4,110	1,267	201	659
Simply Grammar	10	298	198	50	14	-	36
Write to the Point	8	222	144	-	42	12	24
Video P/A	6	40	-	-	40	-	-
Time Management	2	27	20	-	-	7	-
Presentation Skills	2	28	14	14	-	-	-
ASPI	1	7	-	-	7	-	-
New Employee Orientation	4	10	6	2	-	-	2
Asset Inventory Procedure Training	3	66	38	5	8	5	10
FERS/CSRS Retirement	14	239	49	120	44	22	4
Video Conferencing	1	3	-	-	-	-	3
Emergency Preparedness/Personal Safety	13	147	39	13	32	-	63
Extern Training	6	276	234	6	6	6	24
Who Moved My Cheese?	3	57	21	-	-	36	-
Clerk's Office Seminar	15	588	315	84	63	42	84
New Financial Administrator	2	16	16	-	-	-	-
Transition and Change	1	8	-	-	-	-	8
OTHER TRAINING TOTAL	1,425	8,540	1,365	4,404	1,523	331	917
GRAND TOTAL	1,579	10,425	2,518	4,742	1,749	363	1,052



Skills Criteria Established for Case Initiation and Courtroom Services

As part of the staff reorganization commenced in 2000, the Clerk's Office developed a list of basic skills for the majority of Case Initiation and Courtroom Services positions. The list identifies the proficiencies that are required for specific positions within the two operational sections and provides employees with a clearer understanding of the skills they must possess in order to advance. The Court will benefit through a better trained workforce that is capable of performing a wider range of tasks. During 2001, 21 employees were promoted, having achieved the proficiencies required for advancement.

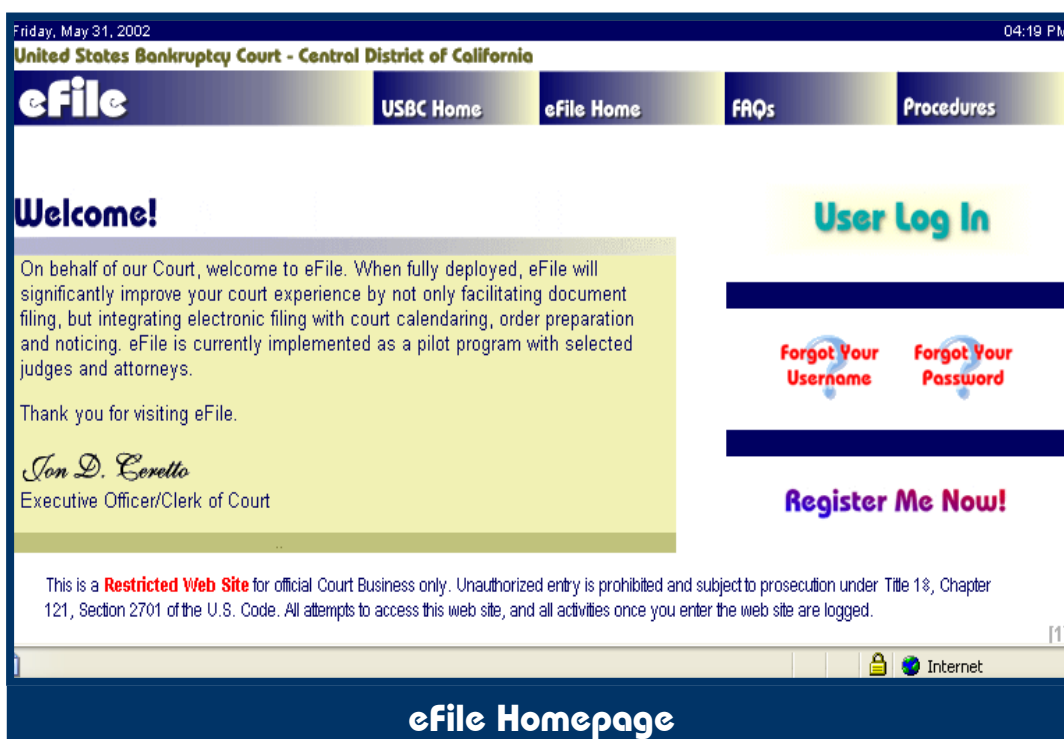
Technology

eFile Pilot Nears Launch Date

By the end of 2001, the Clerk's Office had neared completion of a project to launch *eFile*, a user-friendly program for accepting electronically filed documents. An *eFile* pilot program for the electronic filing of motions for relief from the automatic stay commenced in the Los Angeles Division in early 2002 and plans are underway to expand the *eFile* pilot by increasing the number of participating judges, divisions, and types of documents that can be accepted by *eFile*.

Developed utilizing Lotus Notes, *eFile* features screens that emulate the current paper relief from stay motion forms, with fill-in fields and check boxes. Once the user has completed an online registration, filing an *eFile* motion becomes similar to completing a "fillable" online form. Because the user interface is uncomplicated and intuitive, formal user training is not necessary. Online procedures are posted on the Court's web site and an *eFile* administrator is available for support by telephone.

eFile eliminates redundant operational processes through its integration with the Court's existing automated systems, including those for cashiering, docketing, calendaring, and online case files. A motion filed through *eFile* is automatically cashiered, a docket entry is entered on the case docket, the hearing is placed on the judge's calendar, and an image of the *eFile* motion is attached to the online case file. An *eFile* enhancement, currently under development, will enable participating judges to instantly generate orders from the bench that are automatically signed and entered on the docket. Integration of *eFile* into existing systems enables the Court to continue to benefit from the numerous programs and enhancements developed by the Clerk's Office that have become essential factors in achieving its exemplary levels of case processing efficiency. *eFile* has been designed as a forerunner to the Court's eventual migration to the national Case Management/Electronic Case Files system.





Clerk's Office Continues to Add Case Management Enhancements

The Clerk's Office continued to develop and introduce systems enhancements to its case management automation, adding to the over 60 automation enhancements that have been incorporated since 1995. These enhancements help streamline case processing and save staff time, while improving the delivery of reliable case data to the public. Automation enhancements are designed to reduce redundant data entry, improve the quality and timeliness of case data, track cases and critical case events, and improve customer service. These systems enhancements have been a major factor in enabling the Court to dramatically improve its overall case processing efficiency from a consistently low national ranking amongst bankruptcy court districts in the early 1990's to top rankings by 2000. (See article: *Bankruptcy Court Achieves Extraordinary Improvement in Case Management*, page 34.) During 2001, the Clerk's Office initiated the following case management software enhancements in all divisions:

- **New Petition QC/ICS Program** - An automated program for the quality control of new petition data was successfully launched in all five divisions on March 26, 2001. (See article: *Quality Control Efforts Result in Improved Data Entry of New Petitions*, page 26.) The new program streamlines and standardizes the quality control process for new petition data entry for the entire district, enabling each division to detect and correct any errors prior to the upload of new petition data from the cashiering system to the Court's case management system. The new program also greatly improves upon the collection and analysis of data, and enables management to identify quality trends and specific training needs. QC/ICS also saves approximately 40 hours of staff time each month in the production of monthly statistical reports.
- **Professional Fee Module** - To facilitate complete and accurate records for professional fees, a NIBS enhancement was introduced that automatically displays the professional fees module when the appropriate docket entry is made so that the entry of the professional fee data is not overlooked. The search feature was also improved to enable staff to more quickly locate professionals already in this vast database.
- **Quality Control Automation for Document Images** - A new automated quality control program was developed by the Clerk's Office to identify missing document images. It produces reports of all docket entries that should have a related document image but do not, enabling staff to take timely corrective action. This user-friendly program can be run by operations staff.
- **Auto-Imaging of Order Closing Adversary Proceedings** - Modeled after enhancements for the order closing discharged and dismissed chapter 7 cases, this new automation feature saves labor involved in creating an image of the order closing an adversary proceeding and attaching it to the online case file. This feature is estimated to save approximately 50 hours of district-wide labor per month.
- **Case Data Archive Program** - The Clerk's Office successfully implemented a program designed to archive NIBS case data for cases closed as of April 1997 (with no activity since then). The program reduced the size of the large Los Angeles Division NIBS database, resulting in increased system stability. The archived cases are easily accessible by selecting "Los Angeles Archives" in PACER from the "Select a Division" pull down menu.

Servers Upgraded to Support Higher Speeds and Additional Capacity

During 2001, servers in the district were upgraded to increase the processing speed and hard drive capacity of the system. The network operating system was also upgraded from Novell Netware 3.2 to Novell Netware 5.1. The new operating system enables centralized administration of user accounts, access rights, file systems, and network printers from one common interface. The new features streamline network administrative tasks and enable technical staff to more easily provide support among divisions.

Print-for-Fee Provides Additional Public Access to Online Case Files

Developed by the Clerk's Office, the Print-for-Fee program enables customers visiting the courthouses to automatically request a printed copy of documents in online case files, without the assistance of the Clerk's Office staff. Using a user-friendly interface from computers in the public areas of all divisions, customers can electronically request a copy of a document from an online case file. The requested document pages are printed by an Intake cashier upon receipt of payment from the requesting party. The service initially cost \$0.50 per page, but was reduced to \$0.10 per page on July 1, 2001. In the six weeks following the price reduction, usage of the system doubled compared to the six weeks prior to the cost reduction. The increasing popularity of the Print-for-Fee system decreases the workload for the district staff and provides the public with easier access to case information.

Court Continues to Rely Upon Video Conference Hearing Technology

Introduced in 1999, video conference hearing technology continued to provide the Court with flexibility in administering its caseload by enabling judges to handle cases in two or more divisions without the time, cost, and inconvenience associated with travel. This technology also enables judges from other districts to provide support in the capacity of visiting judge without traveling to the district.

- **Major Upgrade of Video Conference Hearing Technology Completed** - The Clerk's Office completed a project commenced in 2000 to upgrade the cabling, infrastructure, and systems for video conference hearings in all five divisions. With the upgraded cabling and infrastructure installed in all courtrooms, video conference hearing equipment that is on a mobile "video cart" can be shared among courtrooms, saving equipment expense, while providing access to backup video equipment. The new video conference system features a user interface that is easier to use than the previous system, thus improving the ability of judges and courtroom staff to manage video hearings. The system also enables more screen configurations and increases flexibility in setting up a variety of courtroom views.



Mobile Video Cart



- **Intra-District Case Assignments Facilitated by Video Conference Hearing Technology** - During 2001, to balance its caseload between divisions without changing geographical boundaries, the Court continued to rely upon video conference hearing equipment to facilitate the routine assignment of intra-district cases to judges. Judges James N. Barr and John E. Ryan, both located in the Santa Ana Division, were assigned partial caseloads from the Riverside Division that they heard on a regular basis through video conference hearing technology. Judge Barr and Judge Ryan have been handling Riverside Division cases in this manner since 1999. Judge Robin L. Riblet continued to receive a partial caseload from the San Fernando Valley Division which she heard from her Northern Division courtroom, as she has done since February 2000.
- **Other Uses of Video Conference Hearing Technology**
 - The Bankruptcy Appellate Panel met at the Santa Ana Division to handle bankruptcy appeals from throughout the Ninth Circuit and utilized video hearing technology to hear arguments from litigants in both Portland, Oregon, and Las Vegas, Nevada.
 - Judge John L. Peterson, from the District of Montana, used video conferencing to hear adversary proceeding matters assigned to Judge Ellen Carroll in the Los Angeles Division.
 - Judge Ruggero J. Aldisert, a Senior Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals who resides in Santa Barbara, used the Northern Division's video conferencing equipment to attend a Third Circuit hearing in Philadelphia.
 - Chief Judge Thomas T. Glover of Seattle, Washington, provided assistance to the Los Angeles Division by hearing matters assigned to Judge Samuel L. Bufford by video conference.

New Tape Backup Procedures Improve Disaster Recovery Preparedness

To improve the Court's ability to recover vital data in the event of a disaster or other data loss, the Court developed a system to backup data tapes without the cost of an outside service. The backup tapes include all user files, electronic dockets and other case data, as well as online case files.

San Fernando Valley Phone Tree Improves Emergency Readiness

Modeled after telephone paging trees in the Riverside, Santa Ana, and Northern divisions, the San Fernando Valley Division upgraded its phone system to enable selective telephone paging. This password-protected system enables management to dial a code that corresponds to a specific zone in the division (or the entire division) to address staff through the external telephone speakers. This paging system improves the ability of staff to effectively respond to emergency situations.



ASPI Sound Systems Installed District-Wide

To improve communications during video and teleconferencing, the Court replaced its Gentner sound system with a new ASPI system in selected courtrooms in all five divisions. The new system features digital echo canceling and audio pollution technology that eliminates distracting feedback and automatically adjusts sound volumes, thereby improving the sound quality of video proceedings.

All Local Bankruptcy Rules Forms Upgraded to Fillable Format

The Clerk's Office upgraded all Local Bankruptcy Rules forms to a "fillable" format and posted the forms on the Court's web site. The "fillable" forms were created in response to input from attorneys who wanted convenient online access to the forms. The forms, which can be used without additional software, can be found on the Court's web site under "Procedures/Rules/Forms" under the subcategory of "Local Bankruptcy Rules Forms." The "fillable" forms are easier for the public to complete and improve the legibility of documents filed with the Court.

Remote Computer Access Expanded

Citrix, a system that improves remote computer access to network-based applications, was expanded to include all bankruptcy judges throughout the district. A combination server and software, Citrix enables users to dial in and access their files over regular telephone lines. Since the programs accessed through Citrix actually run on the servers in the office instead of on a remote laptop or remote desktop computer, considerably less data is transmitted. This reduction in the exchange of data over telephone lines significantly improves the speed and response times of the remote computers over the previously supported PC Anywhere software.



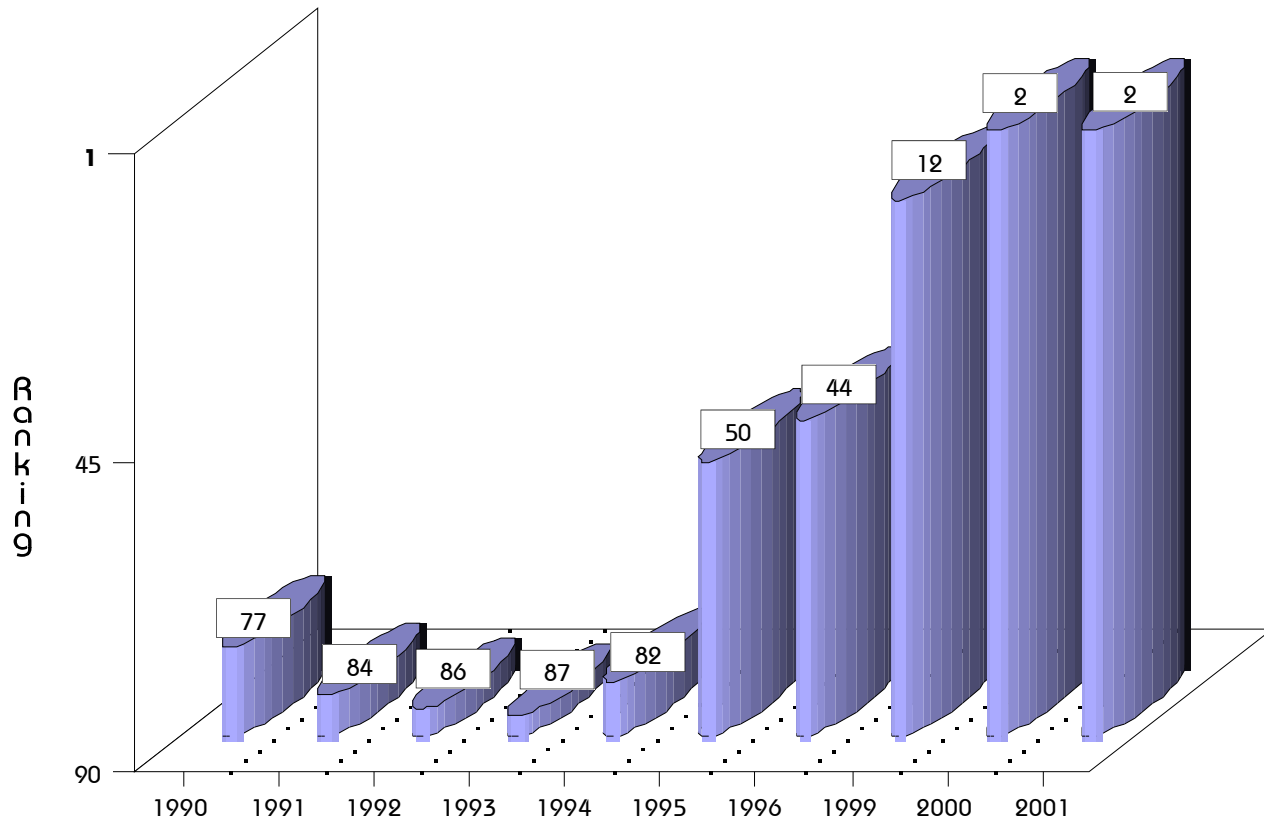
Case Administration

Bankruptcy Court Achieves Extraordinary Improvement in Case Management

The Court ranked second in the nation in case management efficiency for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2001. Based on the 16 measures in the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators* measuring case processing efficiency, the Central District of California Bankruptcy Court continued to rank second nationally out of the 90 courts in the nation. The performance continues a remarkable turnaround which began in 1993, when the Court ranked 87th in the nation.

In addition to providing comparisons with other bankruptcy courts throughout the nation, the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators* are also utilized by the Court to track its case management performance. (See Table 7, next page.) From December 2000 to December 2001, the Court improved or maintained its performance in 9 of the 16 case processing categories measured by the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators*. Further, the Court exceeded or equaled the national average in 15 of the 16 measures. Surpassing the most optimistic projections made just a few years ago, the Court achieved this phenomenal success through effective goal setting, streamlined operations, and the integration of well-designed automation enhancements.

Figure 7
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
Case Processing Ranking Out of 90 Districts: 1990-2001*



*No rankings available for 1997 and 1998



Table 7
Bankruptcy Program Indicators
12 Months Ending December 31, 2001

Chapter 7 Cases	National Median	Central District of California			
		2001	2000	1999	1998
Median Disposition Time	3.8 mos	3.6 mos	3.6 mos	3.6 mos	3.9 mos
% Open After 6 Months	12.1%	5.0%	4.9%	5.4%	7.8%
% Open After 12 Months	5.9%	2.1%	1.7%	1.7%	2.3%
% Open After 36 Months	1.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%
Average Age of Pending Cases	9.4 mos	5.7 mos	5.3 mos.		
Chapter 13 Cases					
Median Disposition Time	38.1 mos	10.6 mos	10.9 mos	13.5 mos	15.9 mos
% Open After 6 Months	91.1%	58.0%	62.4%	65.6%	81.8%
% Open After 36 Months	40.4%	12.4%	11.6%	14.6%	17.0%
% Open After 72 Months	1.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Average Age of Pending Cases	22.8 mos	19.3 mos	18.5 mos		
Chapter 11 Cases					
% Open After 48 Months	16.9%	11.6%	13.2%	16.6%	14.8%
Average Age of Pending Cases	25.5 mos	25.5 mos	40.6 mos		
Adversary Proceedings					
Dischargeability (11 U.S.C. § 523) Median Disposition Time	6.0 mos	4.9 mos	5.1 mos	5.6 mos	6.0 mos
Average Age of Pending Cases	9.6 mos	8.5 mos	9.0 mos		
Other than Dischargeability Median Disposition Time	6.9 mos	7.8 mos	7.8 mos	7.2 mos	8.2 mos
Average Age of Pending Cases	14.4 mos	14.3 mos	14.2 mos		



Pending Caseload Remained Low Despite Increase in Bankruptcy Filings

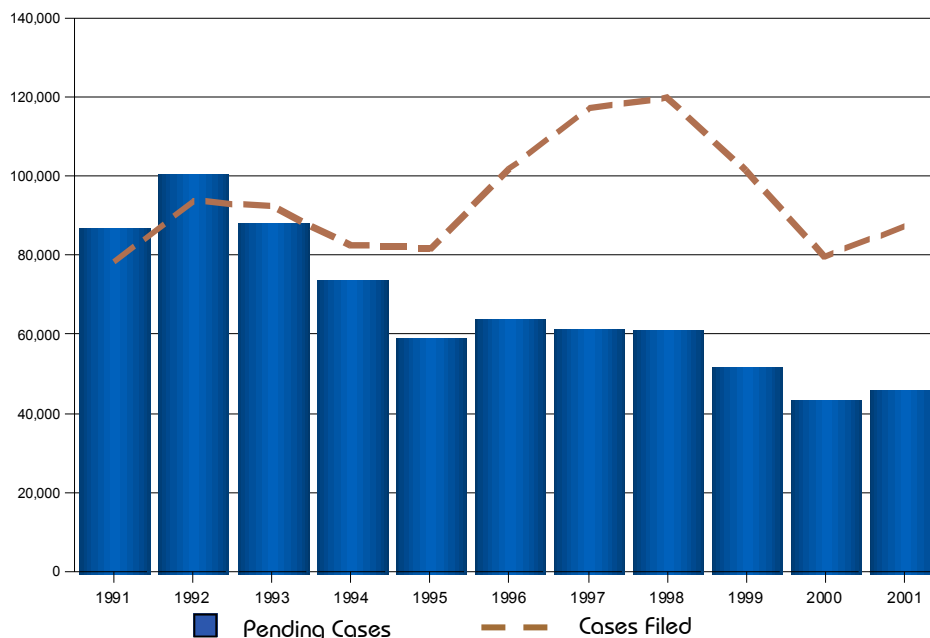
During 2001, the pending caseload for the Bankruptcy Court increased from the record low number of pending cases reached in the previous year. As of December 31, 2001, a total of 46,001 bankruptcy cases were pending, a 5.7% increase from the 43,517 cases pending at the end of 2000. The gain in the number of pending cases resulted from the increase in bankruptcy filings during 2001. However, the percentage increase in the pending caseload was less than the percentage increase in overall filings. (There were 87,374 new filings during 2001 compared to 79,901 filings in 2000, representing a 9.4% increase.)

Not only has the Clerk's Office carefully monitored and controlled the number of pending cases, but the age of the pending caseload has also improved. Compared to 1995, the Court now has remarkably fewer cases that have been open for more than six years. Since 1995 (the first year for which information is available), the Court has made significant reductions in the percentage of older cases that remain pending. (See Table 8, below.) The Clerk's Office staff has made the closing of cases open for more than three years a priority in recent years.

Table 8
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
Analysis of Pending Case Aging: 1995 vs. 2001

	Pending Case Aging Category	12/31/95	12/31/01	Percent Change
Chapter 7	Percent ≤ 4 Months	56.4%	81.0%	30.4%
	Percent over 6 Years	4.7%	1.2%	(75.5%)
Chapter 11	Percent over 6 Years	18.5%	9.2%	(50.3%)
Chapter 13	Percent 3 Years or Less	82.2%	81.5%	(.09%)
	Percent over 5 Years	5.0%	1.8%	(64.0%)
Adversary Proceedings	Percent ≤ One Year	64.2%	70.4%	8.8%
	Percent over 3 Years	13.9%	6.6%	(52.6%)

Figure 8
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
Pending Caseload vs. Bankruptcy Filings: 1991-2001



Docketing and Imaging Performance Continues to Excel

To ensure efficient case processing and the timely availability of case information to the public, the Clerk's Office monitors the time it takes to enter a document on the bankruptcy case or adversary proceeding docket from the day it is filed with the Court. The outgrowth of this monitoring resulted in the creation of Time-to-Docket goals, which are a series of targets that measure the number of days it takes to docket orders and other items. The attainment of these goals generates a sense of friendly competition between the divisions. During 2001, the Clerk's Office docketed a remarkable 90.4% of the 3,320,023 documents filed with the Court within one day of filing (excluding automated entries), a continuation of the excellent docketing performance achieved in 2000.

Along with docketing statistics, the Court also tracks the time it takes for a document to be imaged from the date it was entered on the case docket. During 2001, 90.1% of all items were imaged within one day of docketing. The timely imaging of documents gives the public timely access to the most recent documents filed in the online case files.



Community Outreach

Court Employees Increase Charitable Contributions

In 2001, Court employees contributed \$49,691 to a number of charities through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). This represents a 7% increase from the total contributions pledged in 2000. The CFC, established in 1963, is the only authorized charitable campaign in the federal government workplace. The CFC enables federal employees to contribute money to hundreds of different charities, supporting worthwhile causes throughout the world. The Court also supplies the CFC with a “loaned executive,” who coordinates the campaign with various government agencies in determining and reaching common contribution goals. For 2001, employees were also allowed to contribute to agencies established for those affected by the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Table 9 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Program: 2000-2001			
Division	2000 Dollars	2001 Dollars	Percent Change
Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley	\$33,654	\$35,873	6%
Riverside	\$5,933	\$6,332	6%
Santa Ana	\$6,212	\$6,888	10%
Northern	\$756	\$598	(21%)
TOTAL	\$46,555	\$49,691	7%

Caregiver Support Group Continues in Riverside

The Riverside Division continued to hold meetings for the “Caregivers in the Workplace” support group during 2001. The meetings, which started in February 2000, are facilitated by the Inland Caregiver Resource Center (ICRC). The ICRC is a non-profit organization that aids the families of persons with adult-onset brain disorders (e.g., Alzheimers, Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, Multiple Sclerosis, stroke, etc.). Lunch hour meetings are held once a month and revolve around the discussion of different topics, such as placement issues or the effect of the terrorist attacks. Occasionally, outside speakers are invited to give presentations to the group. The meetings provide an outlet for individuals who care for special-needs family members.

Court Assists Speech-Impaired Debtor

Maintaining the Court’s objective of achieving an impartial environment, special assistance was provided to a speech-impaired debtor to facilitate the debtor’s understanding of and participation in the hearing. A projector was linked to a laptop computer to display text typed by the debtor on a retractable screen in the courtroom. The judge’s extern also read the comments aloud for the record and for improved clarity. The Court also added a new sign language interpreter policy during 2001 to streamline and standardize the process. This situation exemplified the Court’s commitment to assisting physically-impaired individuals involved in hearings.

**Youth Day Observed in District**

Over 130 children throughout the district participated in Youth Day held on April 26, 2001. Each division developed a program to show the children the purpose of the Court and provide an overview of the judicial system. The programs consisted of several activities including scavenger hunts, mock trials, sitting in on court hearings, a poster contest, and a demonstration of the electronic recording of a hearing. Court employees, acting as “chaperones,” explained their job duties and led such games as “Bankruptcy Bingo” and “Bankruptcy Word Search.” The day was a fun experience for young and old alike.

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Los Angeles Division

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Riverside Division

Photo not available
for public viewing.

Santa Ana Division